CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A database storage system for providing storage for metadata sets, each metadata set related to a file uploaded by a user over a network, the database storage system comprising:

a plurality of database storage facilities for storing the metadata sets, each storage facility comprising at least two logically partitioned sections; and

a file management component for managing metadata storage in order to store each metadata set in more than one logically partitioned section and in more than one database storage facility.

2. The database storage system of claim 1, further comprising file uploading and retrieval components for uploading files from the users and for retrieving the files and the metadata sets from the storage system.

3. The database storage system of claim 1, wherein the uploaded files are image files and the metadata sets are image metadata sets.

4. The database storage system of claim 1, further comprising a directory hierarchy that is transparent to the users.

5. The database storage system of claim 1, further comprising a digital fingerprinting component for fingerprinting each uploaded file.

6. The database storage system of claim 1, further comprising a file sharing component for allowing visitors to view the uploaded file.

7. The database storage system of claim 1, further comprising external storage space provided by a storage vendor system for storing uploaded files.

8. The database storage system of claim 1, further comprising a partner system for incorporating uploaded image files in a product.

9. A method for providing storage for metadata sets for multiple users, each metadata set related to a file uploaded by a user over a network, the method comprising:

dividing a plurality of database storage facilities into at least two logically partitioned sections; and

managing metadata storage in order to store each metadata set in more than one logically partitioned section and in more than one database storage facility.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising uploading files from the users and retrieving the files and the metadata sets from the storage system.

11. The method of claim 9, further comprising receiving image files from the users and deriving image metadata sets.

12. The method of claim 9, further comprising providing a directory hierarchy that is substantially transparent to the users.

13. The method of claim 9, further comprising performing digital fingerprinting on each uploaded file.

14. The method of claim 9, further comprising a providing a file sharing component for allowing visitors to view the uploaded files.

15. The method of claim 9, further comprising storing uploaded files in external storage space provided by a storage vendor system.

16. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 9.

17. A network storage system for providing storage space for multiple users, the system comprising:

a file uploading component for uploading an image file from each user to the storage system, and for deriving an image metadata set related to the uploaded image file;

a plurality of database storage facilities for storing each image metadata set, each database storage facility including at least two logically partitioned sections; and

a file management component for managing data storage in order to store each image metadata set in more than one logically partitioned section and in more than one database storage facility, and for directing the image file to an image storage facility.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein the file management component executes a hashing function in order to appropriately direct data to storage.

19. The system of claim 17, further comprising a user information component including an identification mechanism capable of identifying a user through a user identifier.

20. The system of claim 17, wherein each data storage facility includes at least three logically partitioned sections and each image metadata set is stored in three logically partitioned sections.

21. The system of claim 17, wherein a first copy of the image metadata set is stored in read/write format and a second copy and a third copy are stored in read only format.

22. The system of claim 17, wherein the database storage facilities comprise SQL machines.

23. The system of claim 17, further comprising a sharing function for allowing the users to share data with other users.

24. The system of claim 23, further comprising a mechanism for terminating a link in order to stop sharing data with the other users.

25. The system of claim 17, further comprising database storage facilities in disparate locations.

26. A method for storing user data for multiple users using a network storage system, the method comprising:

uploading a data set from a user to the storage system, the data set including an image file;

deriving image metadata from the dataset;

storing the image metadata in logically partitioned sections of database storage facilities; and

managing the image metadata such that the data set is stored in more than one logically partitioned section and in more than one storage facility; and

directing the image file to an alternate storage facility.

27. The method of claim 26, further comprising implementing a hashing function in order to determine an image metadata storage location.

28. The method of claim 26, further comprising performing user verification based on a user identifier.

29. The method of claim 26, further comprising storing the image metadata in three logically partitioned sections.

30. The method of claim 29, further comprising storing a first copy of the image metadata in read/write format and a second copy and a third copy in read only format.

31. The method of claim 26, further comprising storing the image metadata in SQL machines.

32. The method of claim 26, further comprising implementing a sharing function for allowing the users to share data from the uploaded data set with other users.

33. The method of claim 26, further comprising sending a first version of an encrypted link to initiate sharing.

34. The method of claim 26, further comprising invalidating the first version of the encrypted link in order to terminate sharing.

35. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 26.

36. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for storing user data for multiple users using a network storage system, the instructions comprising:

uploading a data set from a user to the storage system, the data set including an image file;

deriving image metadata from the dataset;

storing the image metadata in logically partitioned sections of database storage facilities; and

managing the image metadata such that the data set is stored in more than one logically partitioned section and in more than one storage facility; and

directing the image file to an alternate storage facility.